Phenomenological Study of Leadership Styles for Gen Z in the Transformation of the World of Work in Sidoarjo

Reza Tri Anggara[1], Kumara Adji Kusuma2[*], Rifdah Abadiyah[3]
Management Study Program, University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo, Indonesia
adji@umsida.ac.id

Abstract
The transformation of the world of work marked by the entry of Generation Z into the workforce presents new challenges for organizations, especially in determining a leadership style that is in line with the character and expectations of this generation. Generation Z as digital natives tends to prioritize two-way communication, openness, work flexibility, and attention to mental health and psychological well-being. This study aims to analyze the leadership style preferences of Generation Z in the context of changes in the modern world of work. The research used a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques through in-depth interviews with eight Generation Z informants working in various sectors in Sidoarjo Regency, and validated through source triangulation with two Human Resource Management experts. Data analysis was carried out using the thematic analysis method. The results show that Generation Z's leadership style preferences are dynamic and contextual. The democratic leadership style is the main preference because it provides space for participation and respect for opinions, but the laissez-faire style is considered effective in encouraging independence, while the authoritarian style remains relevant in situations that demand decisiveness and speed of decision-making. Based on these findings, this study formulated a new concept in the form of the Generation Z Adaptive-Contextual Leadership Model, which is a leadership model that places a democratic approach as the main foundation with the flexibility of applying directive and delegative styles according to situational demands. This model emphasizes participatory communication, structural flexibility, and responsibility-based assertiveness, so that it is able to answer the needs of Generation Z in modern organizational dynamics.

Keywords: Generation Z; Leadership Style; Democratic Leadership; Workplace Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world of work has undergone a significant transformation along with the entry of Generation Z into the workforce. The generation born between 1997 and 2012 began to occupy important positions in various industrial sectors, replacing the previous generation that began to enter retirement age. The presence of Gen Z brings new dynamics, as they grow up in a fast-paced and connected digital era. This change requires organizations to adjust in terms of leadership style, in order to create a comfortable work environment and support the productivity of this generation. The implementation of a leadership style that is not in accordance with the characteristics of Gen Z makes it a challenge for companies. These challenges can be obstacles in achieving organizational goals, which can affect Gen Z's performance.(*Nabila Indra Princessa Lukmaditia, Sahibul Mighfar, Sentot Imam Wahjono, "Analysis of Gen Z Behavior in the Work Environment in the Era of Globalization" Vol. 1, 2024*, n.d.) Therefore, this research is here to identify the right leadership style preferences for Gen Z so that companies can create a conducive, effective, and efficient work environment, through leadership style adjustments.

In the midst of the dynamics of generational changes in the world of work, leadership is one of the important elements in an organization because it plays a role in decision-making that further determines the direction, strategy, and achievement of organizational goals.(Karyaadi et al., 2024) Organizations that are able to manage human resources using the right approach will be able to achieve success in efforts to achieve the goals that have been set.(Putri et al., n.d.) In an organization, leaders are responsible not only for organizing and directing, but also for motivating and empowering their team members to achieve optimal outcomes.(Nada et al., 2024) Good leadership is able to create harmony in the team, increase efficiency, and facilitate the achievement of organizational goals on an ongoing basis.(Syuhada et al., 2022)

One of the aspects that is no less important in leadership is the leadership style. The way a leader leads and directs team members is part of a leadership style.(Tazkiya, n.d.) This includes how to make decisions, communicate, and build trust in the work environment.(Rinaldi & Ramadhani, n.d.) A productive work environment can be created through the implementation of the right leadership style. In the context of the transformation of the world of work that Gen Z is currently starting to enter, passionate leaders are able to have flexibility in choosing leadership styles, especially for Gen Z who of course have their own preferences regarding leadership styles.(Cahyati & Adelia, 2024)

Previous research has shown that Generation Z, who were born between 1997 and 2012, has unique characteristics that set them apart from previous generations. As the first generation to grow up in the digital age, they are very familiar with technology and rapid access to information. This shapes the way they work, interact, and express their opinions at work. Quick adaptability to technology and courage to express opinions are very prominent characteristics of Gen Z. In addition, in their work they emphasize more on the principle of mental health, which means they want a work-life balance, as well as a high sense of social concern.(Scott, n.d.) Participatory leadership styles are considered effective in creating a conducive work environment for Gen Z, according to previous research. In contrast, authoritarian and rigid leadership approaches often provoke resistance and lower their job satisfaction levels. (Arsyad, n.d.)

However, a big challenge that many companies face is the lack of understanding of the needs and expectations of Gen Z. It is not uncommon to find companies that have difficulty retaining these young employees due to inappropriate leadership styles. In some cases, this has even triggered protests or increased employee turnover rates. (University of Pancabudi & Coal Development, 2020) Therefore, it is important for companies to understand the characteristics of this generation of employees in order to develop the right leadership approach.

Fierce global competition requires companies to adapt in understanding and responding well to Gen Z, with the aim of maintaining corporate stability. On the other hand, if the company fails to adapt, it will be at risk of experiencing a decrease in the company's productivity. So in this context, the development of the right leadership style is needed by companies in maintaining company stability.

With this research, it is hoped that it can provide many benefits for various parties, especially in creating an effective and efficient work environment. In an era of highly competitive competition, with an understanding of the right leadership style preferences for Gen Z, companies can create a work environment that supports loyalty, productivity, and conduciveness for all employees.

For leaders who can adapt in the implementation of leadership styles, they will be more respected and trusted. In addition, a broad understanding of Gen Z characteristics is key for leaders to maintain company stability. Considering that currently the world of work is undergoing a transformation that was previously fulfilled by the generation before Gen Z and is currently inhabited by Gen Z with various characteristics that are much different from previous generations.

This research also has academic benefits, namely as a scientific reference for studies that discuss leadership styles and the younger generation in the world of work. The findings in this study are expected to enrich the treasure of literature on leadership preferences among Generation Z and become a strong foundation for the development of theories and the application of relevant leadership concepts in the context of this generation.

By understanding the needs and expectations of Gen Z for leadership styles, this research is expected to make a real contribution to the development of more adaptive and competitive human resources. The right leadership style will not only increase employee productivity, but also build loyalty and a positive working relationship between employees and the Company. In the long run, this will support the company's sustainability and success in an increasingly dynamic and challenging era.(Angelia & Astiti, 2020)

The main focus of this study is to analyze leadership style preferences for Gen Z during the transformation of the world of work, so that it is expected to provide a strategic picture for organizations in adjusting leadership approaches according to Gen Z characteristics. The transformation of the world of work influenced by technological developments, changes in organizational culture, and increased work flexibility requires adjustments in leadership patterns. Therefore, understanding leadership style preferences from the perspective of Gen Z is a crucial aspect in observing the dynamics of the relationship between leaders and employees in the modern work era.

With this research, it is hoped that it can have a positive impact on the creation of a conducive and productive work environment. The problem behind this study is that there are still limited studies that comprehensively explain how Generation Z's leadership style preferences are contextual and adaptive, especially in integrating various leadership styles according to work situations, as well as the lack of in-depth exploration of the dimensions of participatory communication, psychological flexibility, and the need for mental well-being in leadership practice. In addition, previous research has tended to place Generation Z's leadership preferences partially on one particular style without examining the compatibility factor between individual character, job demands, and organizational dynamics. This research is also related to the 8th point of the SDGs (*Sustainable Development Goals*), namely "Decent Work and Economic Growth", because a more comprehensive understanding of Generation Z's expectations for leadership is expected to be able to encourage the creation of healthy work relationships and support sustainable economic growth as stated in the SDGs.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach, which was chosen because it is able to provide an in-depth and contextual picture of the phenomenon being studied, namely Generation Z's preference for leadership styles in the context of the transformation of the world of work (Ninik Mega Pratiwi & Manafe, 2022). This approach allows the researcher to explore the informant's subjective views, perceptions, and experiences as a whole, in line with the exploratory and phenomenological nature of the research.

Research Location and Time

The research was carried out in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java, which was selected *purposively* with the consideration that this area is one of the strategic industrial and trade estates in East Java with a significant population of young workers, including Generation Z. Ease of accessibility for researchers domiciled in the region is also a practical consideration to support the effectiveness of the data collection process. The research will be carried out in July 2025.

Informant Determination Techniques

The determination of informants uses *the purposive sampling technique*, which is the selection of informants based on criteria relevant to the research objectives (Suriani et al., 2023). The criteria for informants are set as follows:
1. It is classified as Generation Z, which is an individual born between 1997 and 2012.
2. Have work experience in the formal and informal sectors with a leadership structure or direct supervisor.
3. Domiciled or working in the Sidoarjo Regency area.
4. Willing to participate and provide information openly.

The number of informants is determined based on *the principle of data saturation* (sufficiency of information), which is that data collection is stopped when no significant new information is found (Haryoko et al., n.d.). This study involved 10 informants, consisting of 8 main informants from Generation Z and 2 expert informants from the field of Human Resource Management.

Data Collection Techniques

Primary data was obtained through *in-depth interviews* as the main method. Interviews were conducted with selected informants from Generation Z who have had work experience in the Sidoarjo area. The interview guidelines are arranged in an exploratory-semistructured manner, referring to the theoretical indicators of the three leadership styles in Kurt Lewin's theory, namely: (1) *autocratic* style, (2) democratic style, and (3) laissez-faire style (Adeline, 2022). This approach was chosen to produce rich, in-depth, and contextual data, while supporting the flexibility of exploring relevant topics during the interview process.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using *the Thematic Analysis* method , which was chosen because of its ability to identify patterns of meaning that emerged systematically from qualitative data, especially

the results of interviews (Heriyanto, 2018). The thematic analysis procedure in this study follows the following stages:

1. Data familiarization: Read and understand the entire interview transcript thoroughly.
2. Coding: Coded units of data relevant to the research topic.
3. Theme formation: Groups related codes into recurring and meaningful themes or categories.
4. Theme review: Evaluate the theme's fit with the overall data and research questions.
5. Interpretation: Analyze the tendency of leadership style preferences based on the themes formed.
6. Conclusion: Formulate findings on leadership style preferences that are relevant to Generation Z.

Data Credibility Test Techniques

To ensure the validity and credibility of the findings, this study applies the source triangulation technique through an *expert judgment approach* , namely by involving two expert informants who have competence in the field of Human Resource Management (Susanto et al., 2023). The two expert informants are Dr. Hasan Ubaidillah, SE., MM and Dr. Sumartik, SE., MM, lecturers of the Management Study Program of the University of Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo with a scientific specialization in Human Resources Management.

The involvement of expert informants aims to provide a professional and academic assessment of the findings of interviews with the main informants, so that the resulting interpretations have the strength of theoretical and practical validity. Thus, this triangulation approach is expected to be able to increase **the credibility, objectivity, and accuracy of** the overall research results.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This study involved 10 informants consisting of 8 main informants and 2 expert informants. The main informants come from Generation Z with predetermined criteria. All of them have the status of employees in various work sectors, including F&B, marketing, IT, retail, and administrative staff. This diversity of backgrounds provides a broader picture of Generation Z's perception of leadership styles in the work environment.

Table 1 Informant Profile

Yes	Informant Code	Work Background	Remarks
1	Informant 1	Staff Marketing	Principal Informant
2	Informant 2	Special Staff	Principal Informant
3	Informant 3	Retail Warehouse Staff	Principal Informant
4	Informant 4	Staff It	Principal Informant
5	Informant 5	Staff It	Principal Informant
6	Informant 6	Property Marketing	Principal Informant
7	Informant 7	F&B	Principal Informant
8	Informant 8	F&B	Principal Informant
9	Expert Informant 1	HR Lecturer	Expert Informant
10	Expert Informant 2	HR Lecturer	Expert Informant

Results

Informant Profile

This study involved 10 informants consisting of 8 main informants and 2 expert informants. The main informants are all active employees in various job sectors, including F&B, marketing, IT, retail, and administrative staff. This diversity of work backgrounds provides a broader and representative perspective on Generation Z's perception of leadership styles in the work environment. The complete profile of the informant is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 2 Informant Profile

Yes	Informant Code	Work Background	Remarks
1	Informant 1	Staff Marketing	Principal Informant
2	Informant 2	Special Staff	Principal Informant
3	Informant 3	Retail Warehouse Staff	Principal Informant
4	Informant 4	Staff It	Principal Informant
5	Informant 5	Staff It	Principal Informant
6	Informant 6	Property Marketing	Principal Informant

7	Informant 7	F&B	Principal Informant
8	Informant 8	F&B	Principal Informant
9	Expert Informant 1	HR Lecturer	Expert Informant
10	Expert Informant 2	HR Lecturer	Expert Informant

Source: Primary data, processed by researchers (2025)

Research Findings

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with eight key informants from Generation Z, it is possible to get an idea that the preference for leadership styles is plural and contextual, not concentrated on one style absolutely. Of the eight informants, four informants showed a predominance of preference for democratic leadership styles, two informants for laissez-faire styles, and two informants for authoritarian styles. This difference in preferences reflectsthe strong influence of the work context, industry sector, and work experience of each individual.

Democratic Leadership Style

Four informants from diverse work backgrounds: marketing staff, agency special staff, retail warehouse staff, and IT staff predominantly showed a preference for a democratic leadership style. In general, informants describe their ideal leader as someone who opens up a space for discussion, accepts criticism and suggestions openly, and involves team members in the problem-solving and decision-making process.

Theme 1: Reasons for Liking Democratic Leadership Style

Informant 1 stated that leadership that invites discussion is the main value that is appreciated, because it provides space for employees to optimally convey ideas that are considered in line with the character of Generation Z who think *out of the box*. Open discussion spaces are also seen as able to unite the vision, mission, and goals of the organization more effectively.

"I think open open discussion has many benefits. So, we are one vision, one mission, one goal. So, where do we want this company to go, where do we want to target this company, this is clear." (I1, Interview, November 1, 2025)

In line with this, Informant 2 considers that the democratic leadership style is relevant because it provides freedom of work in a positive corridor, while encouraging member involvement in decision-making to prevent miscommunication.

"If I prefer it, it's a discussion. To avoid misunderstandings whose effect is to hinder work." (I2, Interview, November 9, 2025)

Theme 2: Constraints in Democratic Leadership Style

Although predominantly preferred, informants also identify a number of inherent weaknesses of this style. Informant 1 highlighted that overly open discussions have the potential to cause boredom and hinder decision-making efficiency. Meanwhile, Informant 3 criticized the leader's lack of firmness when it came to closing the debate and making a firm final decision.

"Sometimes leaders consider all votes too much, yes no, the final decision is not firm." (I3, Interview, October 12, 2025)

Theme 3: Impact on Generation Z Performance

The democratic leadership style has been proven to have a positive impact on informant performance. Informant 4 emphasized that the comfort of the work environment formed by the openness of leaders directly affects productivity and intention to stay (*retention*). Informant 3 also reported an increase in morale when the leader gave space for his or her opinions, as the team members involved tended to have a better understanding of the field.

"Most of them are friends who know the conditions in the field, so yes, it must be discussed together so that there are no misunderstandings." (I3, Interview, October 12, 2025)

Laissez-faire Leadership Style

Two informants who work in IT and property marketing show a preference for *laissez-faire* leadership styles. A leader with this style is described as a person who gives complete freedom to the team, only sets targets and deadlines, and only actively engages when there are obstacles that cannot be solved independently.

Theme 1: Reasons for Liking the Laissez-faire Style

Informant 5 appreciated the freedom to determine how, time, and location of work according to personal preferences, which was considered to be able to increase focus and encourage the birth of creative ideas. The trust given by the leader is seen as a more effective motivational stimulus than strict supervision.

"When I'm given freedom and trust, I'm more passionate, creative, and sometimes motivated to come up with new ideas." (I5, Interview, November 2, 2025)

Informant 6 emphasized that this freedom provides space for Generation Z to innovate beyond the expectations of leaders, especially in jobs that require high creativity such as property marketing.

"If we are Gen Z, we can be more innovative, have ideas that maybe our boss doesn't have." (I6, Interview, November 9, 2025)

Theme 2: Constraints in the Laissez-Faire Style

Both informants agreed that the main weakness of this style lies in the unrealistic set of *deadlines*. When the demands of time are not proportional to the complexity of the job, psychological stress and work stress inevitably arise.

"I was once asked to complete a work that was actually quite complex, but I was given a deadline of only a few hours or one day. It was quite stressful for me." (I5, Interview, November 2, 2025)

Theme 3: Impact on Generation Z Performance

Overall, *the laissez-faire style* is considered to have a positive impact on creativity, innovation, and job satisfaction, especially on jobs that are in line with individual passions. Informant 6 revealed that a free and interest-based work environment encourages faster and more effective work completion.

"If the environment is good, I actually feel good, the work is a satset. Because everything is according to their respective passions." (I6, Interview, November 9, 2025)

Authoritarian Leadership Style

Two informants working in the F&B sector showed a preference for authoritarian leadership styles. The characteristics of leaders in their work environment are described as those who have full control over the entire work process, provide direct instructions, and require the execution of tasks in accordance with strict standard operating procedures (SOPs), without much room for discussion.

Theme 1: Reasons for Liking Authoritarian Leadership Styles

Informant 7 stated that the clarity of work structures and standardized SOPs facilitates the execution of tasks, improves focus, discipline, and work efficiency, especially in congested operational situations such as weekends in the F&B sector.

"From the leadership of a firm person there are instructions and structures that allow me to work effectively and also very efficiently." (I7, Interview, September 25, 2025)

Informant 8 added that the leader's assertiveness in a *time-pressure* situation actually creates a sense of security, because all team members clearly understand the steps that must be taken.

"A firm leader makes me feel secure because I know what to do without the slightest bit of doubt." (I8, Interview, September 21, 2025)

Theme 2: Constraints in Authoritarian Leadership Styles

The main obstacle felt by the two informants is related to the limited space for aspiration and the emergence of psychological pressure. Informant 7 expressed his discomfort because he did not have

the opportunity to express his opinion, while Informant 8 described thecondition as an emotional burden that felt oppressive.

"Maybe because it's so strict, I can't, so I don't want to give employees the opportunity to speak or express their opinions. So yes, I can just say 'yes, I'm ready.'" (I7, Interview, September 25, 2025)

Theme 3: Impact on Generation Z Performance

Despite its limitations, authoritarian leadership styles have been shown to increase focus, discipline, and work productivity, especially in Generation Z who are still in the early stages of their careers and need clear work direction. Informant 8 stated that a firm and directed work structure minimizes indecision at work.

"I am definitely more productive when there is a firm and directed work structure. So I don't hesitate, and I don't get confused." (I8, Interview, September 21, 2025)

Expert Informant Views

Both expert informants as a whole reinforce and validate the findings of this study from both an academic and practical perspective.

Expert Informant 1 (Dr. Hasan Ubaidillah, SE., MM) emphasized that the dominance of democratic leadership styles in Generation Z is a relevant and contextual finding, but not absolute. The effectiveness of leadership is largely determined by who the style is applied to, in what situations, and its impact on the work environment. Kurt Lewin's theory of leadership style is considered still relevant as a framework for analysis, because it is able to comprehensively describe the dynamics of leader-subordinate relationships across generations.

Expert Informant 2 (Dr. Sumartik, SE., MM) added that the characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives who are adaptive, critical, oriented towards two-way communication, and have a high sensitivity to mental health make the democratic leadership style the most aligned approach. Nevertheless, democratic does not mean directionless; Leaders still need to provide a roadmap, clear guidance, and firmness so that the work process remains structured and productive. Authoritarian and laissez-faire styles are considered more relevant in the context of situational and corporate entrepreneurship.

The two expert informants agreed that adaptive leadership is the most suitable model for leading Generation Z in the current era of workplace transformation — namely the ability of leaders to combine all three leadership styles flexibly according to individual needs and organizationaldemands.

Discussion

Generation Z's Leadership Style Preferences: Plural, Contextual, and Adaptive

The results of the study show that the leadership style preferences of Generation Z in Sidoarjo are not singular, but plural and are greatly influenced by the work context, industrial sector, and individual level of work experience. These findings support the view that leadership effectiveness is determined by the suitability between the leadership style, the character of the individual led, and the work situation faced (Ajefri, n.d.). There is no one leadership style that is universally superior in all organizational conditions.

The Dominance of Democratic Styles: The Need for Participation and Work Meaningfulness

The dominance of preference for democratic leadership styles reflects Generation Z's fundamental need for a participatory, communicative, and supportive work environment**.** This style is perceived to be able to increase a sense of appreciation, encourage creativity, and reduce *turnover intention*. These findings are consistent with research by Andriyani et al. (2024), which shows that micromanagerial leadership has a negative impact on the performance of Generation Z, while participatory approaches have been shown to be more effective in encouraging productivity and work commitment. Expert informants also confirmed the suitability of democratic style with transformational leadership, particularly in building organizational common goals (IA2, February 2, 2026).

Nevertheless, the findings of the field remind that the democratic style has limitations if it is not accompanied by firmness. Protracted discussions and a lack of firmness in closing the debate can hinder operational effectiveness. Therefore, an effective democracy requires a permanent leader structure to be the final determinant after listening to the team's input.

The Relevance of Laissez-Faire: Autonomy as a Catalyst for Innovation

The *laissez-faire* style is found to be relevant for Generation Z who work in fields that demand high creativity and independence, such as IT and marketing. The freedom given by leaders has proven to be a catalyst for the emergence of innovation and intrinsic motivation. Research by Dilapanga et al. (2025) confirms that this style has two sides: on the one hand it encourages creativity and responsibility, but on the other hand it has the potential to decrease productivity for individuals who do not have adequate maturity and self-discipline.

A critical finding of this study is the risk of psychological distress that arises when *laissez-faire* is accompanied by unrealistic *deadlines*. This condition is in line with the research of I Putu Dharmawan Pradhana et al. (2024) who found that high workload and unreasonable demands are the main triggers of work stress and *turnover intention* in Generation Z. Thus, the application of this style must be selective and accompanied by realistic work expectations and intense communication between leaders and subordinates.

The Situational Relevance of Authoritarian Styles: Between Efficiency and Psychological Pressure

This study finds that authoritarian leadership styles still have contextual relevance for Generation Z, especially in sectors that demand speed, precision, and high compliance with SOPs such as F&B. This finding is in contrast to some of the literature that considers autocratic styles to be completely irrelevant to Generation Z (Pangestika et al., n.d.), and instead enriches the discussion by showing that industry contexts and career stagesinfluence acceptance of this leadership style.

In the early phase of their careers, Generation Z who are inexperienced actually need clarity of instructions and a firm work structure so as not to experience confusion. However, its application must be proportional, excessive psychological pressure and lack of aspiration space remain risk factors that have the potential to reduce comfort and work commitment.

Adaptive Leadership as an Ideal Model

Based on the overall findings and validation of expert informants, this study confirms that the most effective leadership model for Generation Z is adaptive leadership*: the* ability of leaders to combine democratic styles as the main approach, with *laissez-faire* and situational authoritarian stylesAI work context and individual readiness. These findings are in line with the research of Apriyanto & Maria (2025), which confirms that *adaptive leadership* has a significant effect on improving the performance of Generation Z in modern organizations, with *employee engagement* as an important mediator.

Thus, the transformation of the world of work marked by the entry of Generation Z as the dominant workforce requires leaders and organizations to abandon rigid and monolithic leadership approaches**,** towards a leadership model that is dynamic, dialogical and oriented towards the psychological well-being of employees without sacrificing clarity of direction and organizational effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the leadership style preferences of Generation Z in the context of the transformation of the world of work in Sidoarjo Regency. Based on the results of in-depth interviews with eight key informants and two expert informants, as well as thematic analysis that has been conducted, this study yields three main conclusions.

First, Generation Z's leadership style preferences are plural and contextual, not centered on one style absolutely. Although democratic leadership styles emerged as the most dominant preference, laissez-faire and authoritarian styles remained relevant in specific job contexts. The democratic style is preferred because it is able to create an open, participatory, and supportive work environment that supports the psychological comfort of values that are in line with the character of Generation Z as a digital generation that is used to two-way communication and is oriented towards meaningful work. The

laissez-faire style is relevant in jobs that demand high creativity and independence, while the authoritarian style is still effective in the operational sector with demands for speed, precision, and compliance with SOPs as well as in Generation Z who are in the early stages of their careers and need clear work directions.

Second, each leadership style has strengths as well as limitations that are situational. The democratic style has the potential to hinder decision-making efficiency if it is not accompanied by the firmness of leaders. The *laissez-faire* style risks causing psychological pressure and work stress when accompanied by unrealistic target setting. Meanwhile, authoritarian styles, although they increase focus and productivity, are prone to causing psychological discomfort and suppressing the aspirations of Generation Z employees if applied excessively. These findings confirm that there is no one leadership style that is universally optimal in all organizational conditions.

Third, the most effective leadership model for Generation Z in the era of transformation of the world of work is *adaptive leadership*, which is the ability of leaders to combine the three leadership styles flexibly and situationally. The democratic style is used as the main approach to build work participation and attachment, while *laissez-faire* and authoritarian styles are applied proportionally according to the work context and the level of individual readiness. This approach allows leaders to continue to provide space for expression and psychological comfort for Generation Z, while maintaining clarity of direction, assertiveness, and effectiveness of organizational performance.

This research provides practical implications for companies in Sidoarjo, especially in designing the development of leadership competencies that are responsive to the characteristics of Generation Z. Leaders need to be equipped with the ability to read the work context, understand individual needs, and choose the right leadership approach situationally. At the organizational policy level, companies are advised to develop a dialogical work culture, provide a structured space for aspirations, and ensure realistic work expectations so that Generation Z's job satisfaction and attachment can be maintained in a sustainable manner.

This research has a number of limitations that need to be considered. First, the relatively limited number of informants (8 main informants) in a single administrative area limits the ability to generalize findings to a broader context. Second, data is obtained *self-report* through interviews, so it has the potential to contain perception biases from informants. Third, this study has not considered moderation variables such as organizational culture, industry type more broadly, or seniority level that may also influence leadership preferences.

For further research, it is recommended to expand the scope of regions and industrial sectors, increase the number of informants until *stronger saturation data* is achieved, and consider a mixed methods approach that combines qualitative data with larger-scale quantitative surveys. In addition, the exploration of mediating variables such as *employee engagement*, *psychological safety*, and *organizational commitment* will enrich understanding of the leadership dynamics of Generation Z in the midst of the ever-evolving transformation of the world of work.

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